

FARMER FRANK

The story of a Minneapolis “city kid” turned respected cattleman.

by Peyton Schmitt, American Angus Association



Soft morning light pours through the windows of the office in Kimball, Minn., as three generations of Schiefelbeins gather to discuss the latest happenings on the farm.

At Schiefelbein Farms, “family meeting” and “staff meeting” are interchangeable. With seven sons and five grandchildren working full-time on the operation — and even more helping on the weekends — the table is full. Frank Schiefelbein II can count on his family to handle all aspects of the business he has built, with each member serving as an expert in their area.

Despite being the largest registered Angus operation in Minnesota and holding many awards and accolades, Frank and Donna “Frosty” Schiefelbein say their family is their greatest accomplishment. Through more than 65 years of marriage, “Big Frank” and Frosty have raised nine sons, who blessed them with 32 grandchildren and 21 great-grandchildren.

“I love seeing them all work together,” Frosty says. “Now their kids are in it, too. They really are dedicated to this whole thing.”

“Basically, our enjoyment is the kids,” Frank adds.

Recalling their humble beginnings, long before their children came along, brings about laughs. Frank



Frank Schiefelbein II

grew up in North Minneapolis and considered himself a city kid.

“I knew nothing about farming,” he says.

However, his grandfather liked to fish. When looking for a property outside of the city for fishing and summer vacations, his family found the perfect cabin on the lake — but there was just one catch. To buy the cabin, they also had to purchase the 170-acre farm it sat on. The Schiefelbeins had no plans to grow crops or raise livestock, but the sellers refused to separate the cabin from the farm. Set on having a place

to fish, his family decided to purchase the property, land and all. This decision shifted the course of Frank’s life in ways he could never have fathomed as just a boy.

LIFE ON THE FARM

Frank’s family spent summers at the cabin, but he quickly grew tired of fishing.

“I fished for two days, and then I thought ‘Well, this is enough of that,’” Frank says. “I don’t like fish. They stink.”

Soon, a local farmer recruited Frank to work on his threshing crew. That summer, he ran the threshing rig until the fall when school began. This became the routine for Frank — working each summer on the farm until it was time to return to Minneapolis, where his classmates soon came to know him as “Farmer Frank.”

“Everybody knew I was going to be a farmer,” Frank says.

After graduating high school, Frank attended college to study math and science, earning his degree in just three years. Then he married Frosty, his high school sweetheart, and joined the Air Force.

However, Frank still dreamed of being a farmer. After two years in the service, Frank was discharged in 1955. Merely hours after his release, he headed straight back to the farm,

with his wife and their first son in tow.

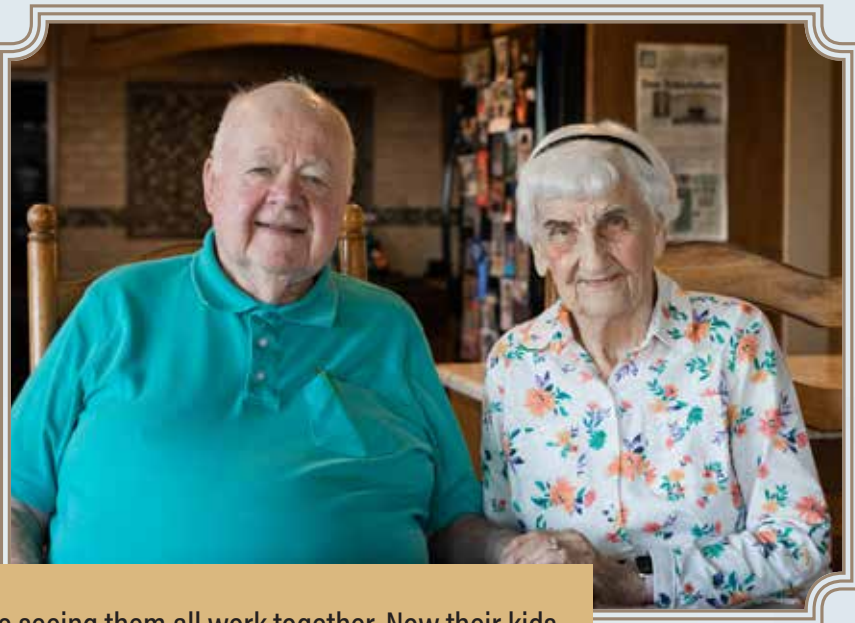
When they arrived at the farm for the first time, Frank and Frosty trekked through the snow and were greeted by a cold, bare farmhouse. The house had no electricity or water — let alone furnishings — but Frank didn't care.

"I was so excited," Frank says.

Frosty struggled to share Frank's enthusiasm. As he eagerly explored the second floor of the house, a startling noise interrupted him.

"All of a sudden, I just heard this horrible groaning and moaning," Frank says.

He found Frosty crying, sitting on a five-gallon bucket downstairs, the only place to sit in the house. She couldn't imagine living here to raise their family. Frank consoled her, promising they would make the empty house a home.



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— Frank and Donna "Frosty" Schiefelbein

GETTING THE HANG OF THINGS

With Frank's reassurance and time spent fixing up the little farmhouse, Frosty soon began to love the farm as much as her husband. However, Frank was still a novice when it came to anything beyond pitching bundles and shocking grain. Luckily, he could rely on the advice of his neighbors when deciding where to start. He recalls his neighbor telling him, "Everyone around here has milk cows."

"So, I went and bought two milk cows and brought them home that night," Frank says.

He had just managed to learn how to milk his cows when his neighbor suggested he get some pigs as well.

"He said, 'Everybody's got pigs,'" Frank recalls. "So I got pigs."

This trend continued as Schiefelbein Farms expanded, in both acreage and



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livestock. Frank continued to buy more farm ground and build his dairy herd, grateful for continued guidance from his community.

“They helped me — they were real nice,” Frank says. “Finally, I got the hang of things.”

Though their neighbors assumed the pair would eventually throw in the towel and return to city life, Frank and Frosty persisted. Things were going well for Frank until he ran into a problem most cattle producers only dream of: he had too much green grass. At that time for dairy cattle, if you didn’t have a feed truck, you’d bring the cows to the feed, he recalls.

“I’d have to bring my 170-some cows down from the pasture at four in the morning,” Frank says. “Then they’d be letting their milk down on the path and half the milk would be on the ground — it wasn’t working very good.”

As he wondered what he would do with all his grass, a neighbor from across the lake suggested he raise beef cattle.

“I had never heard of beef cows,” Frank says. “I thought ‘cows are cows.’”

Frank discussed this possible solution, asking his neighbor what type of cattle he should buy and what they looked like. The advice that came back said he needed to get Angus cattle, and he should make sure they were the biggest ones he could find.

Frank decided he needed to invest in good Angus genetics to produce consistently high-quality beef. In 1959 he found what he thought was the best Angus herd in the state,

belonging to M.L. Snyder in Madelia, Minn. He purchased the entire heifer calf crop there two years in a row.

“Then I closed the herd,” Frank says. “I never bought another cow.”

Today, of the 1,000 females on the Schiefelbein farm, all but 24 head trace back to a single cow.

After buying his first Angus cattle, Frank’s herd continued to grow in both quality and quantity. Relying on his college education, Frank was meticulous in his recordkeeping and decision-making, using data and probability to guide him as opportunities to improve continued to arise.

In 1970 Schiefelbein Farms adopted the use of artificial insemination (AI), allowing them to make quicker genetic advancements. They accelerated these improvements even further in 1978 when they helped pioneer the use of embryo transfer (ET) technology.

Today, the family hosts an annual bull sale, which welcomes many loyal customers back each year. Schiefelbein Farms is also home to a 3,500-head feedyard, allowing them to operate a buy-back program. The Schiefelbeins place great value in purchasing their customers’ calves, confident in the results their genetics will yield on the grid.

FAMILY OF FARMERS

The farm started with Frank and Frosty’s efforts, but continues thanks to the devoted efforts of their family. Seven of his eight living sons work full-time for Schiefelbein Farms, with the eighth still helping on weekends. When it came time to send his boys to college, Frank wanted to ensure

they had education from all the top agricultural schools in the nation.


“At the time, Kansas was the cow state,” Frank says, “So Frankie went to Kansas State.”

He continues down the line, naming the institutions his sons attended and their specialties.

“Then I was feeding some cattle, and Iowa was a feedlot state,” Frank says. “So Rick went to Iowa State.”

As his sons and grandsons continue to return to Kimball, each takes on a key role in the operation. From managing feeder cattle or the crop program to handling finances and marketing, each family member contributes to the operation according to their strengths.

“They’re all good boys,” Frosty says. “I’m raising them to be good people, and that’s what they are.”

Frank Schiefelbein embodies the hard-working, entrepreneurial spirit shared by cattlemen across the nation. The young boy who once decided he’d rather farm than fish could have never foreseen recognition as a 2021 Angus Heritage Foundation inductee many years later. When reflecting on their story, Frank puts it quite simply: “I guess I just love farming,” Frank says. “And Frosty just went along with it.” 



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